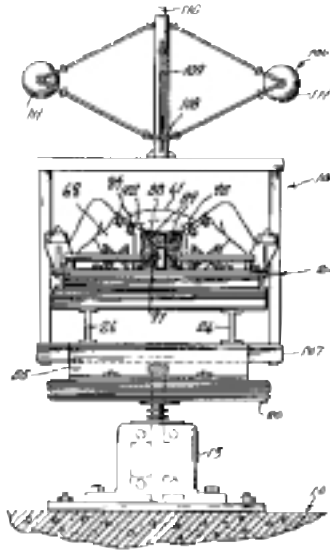


Congratulations! It's a ricocheting baby boy!

For the first time, the *Annals of Improbable Research* (see page 1506) Ig Nobel Committee has awarded an Ig Nobel Prize for Managed Health Care. The prizes mark research achievements that “cannot or should not be reproduced.” This research fits into the latter category.

Perhaps mindful of the scant hours new mothers now spend in hospital after delivery in the US, the committee chose an invention that promises to propel babies out of their mothers in minutes flat. Patented on Nov. 9, 1965, by George B. Blonsky (since deceased) and Charlotte E. Blonsky of New York and San Jose, California, the apparatus uses centrifugal force to facilitate childbirth. The mother is strapped to a circular table, which is then rotated at high speed (see figure). A piece of netting catches the baby so that he or she is not flung against the wall.

According to the description sub-



mitted to the US patent office, “the fetus needs the application of considerable propelling force to enable it to

push aside the constricting vaginal walls.” The inventors argue that, unlike “more primitive peoples,” most “civilized women” do not have the muscles “needed in confinement.”

This is where the Blonskys’ invention comes in handy. They claim that their “rotatable apparatus” will subject the mother and fetus “to a centrifugal force directed to assist and supplement the efforts of the mother so that such centrifugal force and her efforts act in concert to overcome the action of resisting forces and facilitate the delivery of the child.”

To our knowledge, the apparatus has never been manufactured or tested. But how long will it be before a US health maintenance organization or a cash-strapped provincial ministry of health is tempted to hurry along nature and free up hospital beds faster? — C.J. Brown, CMAJ